

**and upon this rock I shall build my church by
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Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

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Summary:

The morning two days after the breach is closed, his mother reaches out to touch his hand, and before Will can help it, he flinches away.

Post season 2, no one is quite okay - but they will be.

and upon this rock I shall build my church

Author's Note:

I don't really know what this is, but I know I wanted to write it. It was supposed to be only about Will but I'm pretty sure it's going to turn into a longer post-season 2 dealing with the trauma/healing fic. Or that's the plan anyway.

Will's been getting better quickly now that he had sweat out the monster burrowed beneath his skin, but he still isn't anywhere near fine. He shivers often and his joints are painfully stiff, and he's constantly exhausted.

'Zombie boy,' some older kids called him, but he's never looked more like the walking dead they accused him of being than he does now, with his clammy skin, bloodshot eyes and ravenous appetite.

The doctors say that the only thing that will truly help is rest and time.

They had said that the first time they had gotten him back too, for all the good it had done him in the end.

But in this, they're probably right. There are some wounds that only time can heal—as much as they ever will, anyway.

The morning two days after the breach is closed, Joyce reaches out to hold Will's hand during breakfast, or maybe simply to pat it gently.

Will flinches away so violently that he knocks down the glass of orange juice she had poured for him.

He watches detachedly as the orange liquid spreads all over the table and drips down onto the floor. *Drip, drop. Drip, drop.* He could watch this forever, and in fact, it feels like he does. Like this moment has gone on forever.

His mother and brother are silent as Will stares at his hand like it's

betrayed him, and Will can't bring himself to look his mother in the eyes as she moves away from the table to grab a clean sponge. He knows he'll see guilt and sadness there, and he's tired of the way she looks like he could break at any moment.

(The truth is, he broke so long ago all he's been doing ever since was trying to patch up the pieces in something resembling the happy boy everyone remembers—some days, he even thinks he succeeds.)

He forces his hands to keep still when his mother wipes the table, and he forces himself not to shake when she pulls him into a hug after that's done. Will feels like Jonathan's eyes can see right through him, like they're burrowing holes in his skin and flesh, and he forces himself not to shiver because of it.

He hates all of this. He wishes it could all be over with already.

He only realizes he's spoken aloud when his mother's grip tightens almost painfully around him. Jonathan rests a hand on top his head, and Will hates that it helps too. That this—his family and their constant touching—makes him feel safer, like the beast can't reach him there, when it had before.

The thing no one realized was that when was possessed, he was still aware of what was happening. It was still his body, even if he wasn't in control—everything it went through, *Will* went through. Everything it felt, *Will* felt.

And yes, it had been the only way to save him, and no, he wouldn't have had them make any other choice, but in the end, what remained was that Will could still remember his mother standing over him and hurting him as he writhed in pain, screaming inside his mind as his body burned.

So yes, he flinches when his mother reaches out for him, because every time she does, those moments flash before his eyes and he has to get away. It only lasts for a handful of seconds, but it's more than enough for Will's fear response to kick in.

He hates that too.

"I think I'm broken," he confesses to Jonathan that night. He had crept inside his brother's bedroom because he didn't want to wake up their mother after his nightmare—unlike Will, who was still officially homesick, and Jonathan, who had admitted once that he sometimes dozed off in class, Joyce couldn't afford to go on without sleep for much longer.

He doesn't know why he's just said this. The words slipped out of his mouth almost of their own volition. For a second, Will freezes, sure he's possessed again and that someone else is talking through his mouth. But no, the second passes and he remains as in control of his body as he ever is, these days.

He stands there, frozen, listening to his brother's breathing—it's peaceful and reassuring in the way so few things are these days. He's about to turn around and head back to his room when Jonathan speaks.

"You're not broken."

Will's heart skips a beat. "You heard that?" Will whispers, voice caught in his throat. He feels chilled; like his blood stopped in his veins.

The bedsheets ruffle as Jonathan sits up. With a soft click, he turns on the lamp on his bedside table. His hair looks terrible and his eyes blink rapidly as he adjusts to the sudden light, but even as he stifles a yawn he looks at Will with concern and outrage instead of the pity Will was half expecting.

"Hey," he repeats softly as he gestures at Will to join him on the bed, "you're not broken, okay?" He pulls Will into a hug. "Now, why don't you tell me what's going on and why you came to me instead of Mum—does it have to do with what happened this morning? Because you know she didn't care about that. It wasn't your fault."

Will's heart starts pounding in his chest. Unable to speak, he only nods, though his mind hasn't changed. There is still something wrong with him.

Looking up at his brother's face though, he only sees concern there, and he starts wondering if maybe, just maybe, he could tell his brother about what's going on inside his head.

It scares him to even be thinking it, but he entertains the thought for a while. Finally, he sighs. "You can't tell Mum, alright? You have to swear it," he says, narrowing his eyes as he looks his brother dead in the eyes. "Swear it."

If possible, Jonathan looks only more worried, but this isn't something Will is willing to budge on.

"Fine, I swear," Jonathan replies when he realizes that Will's not joking around.

Will relaxes a little and he starts to wring his hands in his lap. He stares at them instead of looking at his brother—it makes talking easier, if not by much.

"I just... Sometimes, I feel like it's still inside me. Like if I close my eyes, it won't be me opening them again, and I'll just be stuck back there again, and I'll be screaming but no one will hear me and..."

He only registers how quick his breathing has gotten when Jonathan tells him to stop, to slow down. But Will can't, he's trembling and the words won't stop coming out of his mouth now that he's started talking. It's like a river breaking free from a dam, like an avalanche rolling down a mountain—it's powerful and Will is helpless to stop it. He can only let himself be carried by it and hope he doesn't drown or suffocate.

"... and then I remember when the underground maze thing was burning because it felt like *I* was burning, and I know there was no other way to chase it out of me in the end but I still felt it, I still felt it and it *hurt* —and you can't tell Mum, okay, Jonathan, you can't tell her, you know she'll freak and it'll hurt her. She needed to do it and I know that but my stupid brain doesn't seem to get it and I *flinch* every time she gets close and I hate it, Jonathan, I hate it."

He almost collapses once he's done. His lips taste like salt, and that's how he realizes he's been crying this whole time. His cheeks are wet

and cold, and his head hurts. He feels emptier, too, but also calmer.

Jonathan pales. He opens his mouth and closes it almost just as soon, at a loss for words. “You remember,” he finally says, voice choked up with horror. And, “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry this happened to you.”

His grip on Will’s arms is so tight it almost hurts, but, Will decides, it’s a good kind of hurt. The kind that makes him feel more real. Jonathan keeps apologizing and saying he deserved better, and it’s nothing he hasn’t heard a thousand times—nothing their mother hasn’t told him a thousand times—but somehow, it helps a little more this time.

“Hey,” Jonathan says after a moment of silence, poking at Will gently until he looks up at his brother, “you’re not possessed anymore, or whatever that was. You’re free—and if it ever got you again, we’d just free you like we did this time. You’re safe, okay? And you’re not broken; not any more than the rest of us, anyway,” he adds with an awkward smile.

There are shadows under his brother’s eyes. Somehow, Will had seen there before but he had never really thought about what they meant, never wondered if maybe his brother was losing sleep for more reasons than simply because his little brother’s nightmares woke him up.

He’s been selfish, he realizes with a rolling wave of guilt. It was his fault everyone else got dragged into this Upside Down business, after all. Jonathan’s face flash with a hint of panic. “Hey, no, that’s not what I meant,” he says, and that’s how Will finds out he spoke out loud earlier. “You’re not being selfish. It was a joke—you know I can be bad at those.”

Despite himself, Will’s lips pull into a small smile. “*Can be ?*” he asks teasingly. “You’re *always* terrible with jokes.”

Jonathan huffs out a laugh and it almost feels like they’re back *before*, when everything was alright.

It makes Will’s chest swell with hope, this idea that maybe that time isn’t as lost as he had thought. It’s scary too, because it’s the kind of

hope that hurts.

But if it means that one day, he can hope to be alright again, Will doesn't think it's a pain he'll ever mind.

("Hey, Jonathan?"

"Yeah?"

"Thanks.")